

Verse by Verse: Revelations 3:17

By Lloyd Anderson

[Song plays]

Announcer:

The Bible Institute of Los Angeles Incorporated, half century old Christian training center of the West, presents verse by verse with Dr. Lewis T. Talbot, Biola chancellor, and one of America's great evangelical leaders. Now, once again, your radio Bible teacher, Dr. Lewis T. Talbot.

Lloyd Anderson:

Good morning again, friends, as we share with you on this, the closing broadcast day of this particular week. I'm sure that many of you know that Dr. Talbot, of course, is holding meetings up in San Francisco, California. He's currently, I think, with a Melrose church there. And I trust you'll continue to remember him in prayer as he carries on for the Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Talbot wanted me personally to mention to all of you who are friends of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, his own personal thanks for your many, many hundreds of remembrances on his birthday broadcast last Monday. You know, it was a wonderful broadcast. Quite a number of his friends spoke words of encouragement and of joy concerning his ministry over the years. And he does want me to thank you for him for all of the cards that came in. And then many of you were kind enough, and prayerful enough, to send in money as well for the broadcast to be placed for a men's dormitory on the campus at La Mirada of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. As you know, this men's dormitory will be a memorial to the radio listeners of this particular station and of the broadcasts of the school. It will not be possible for Dr. Talbot, of course, to acknowledge all of

your lovely cards and sentiments that have come in, but I trust you'll remember him and realize that he carries you in his own heart, and he's prayerful that God may bless you and your family and your work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is Dr. Lloyd Anderson, pastor of the Bethany Baptist Church in West Covina. Dr. Talbot wanted me to mention the address of our church, 3903 North Irwindale in West Covina. God has blessed in a real way, and we thank Him for it, just a Sunday or two ago, we had three less than eleven hundred in our Sunday school. And how we praise God for the way He uses the word and how the hearts of the people are being moved to do a great thing for the Lord Jesus Christ. And so would you remember us, as we have a part, with you, in getting the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ out in that eastern part of this particular valley. Now, you remember yesterday we concluded our remarks in the broadcast with a message to the church at Laodicea, how that the Lord Jesus Christ now comes to the last of the seven churches of the Book of Revelation, and how that this church is so different from all of the other six, with a realization that He hasn't a single word of commendation to give to this church. To all of the other churches, He made words of commendation, He praised them for some things that they were doing and saying. But when you come to the Laodicean church, you'll find that nothing is worthy of commendation. Now the tragedy of the church at Laodicea, not only as a local church some 2,000 years ago, but also as an historical period of church history in which many Bible teachers believe we're living today, is that here you have a tepid Church, here you have a church that is spiritually Luke Warm. The tepid Church does not deny the cross, but they will tell you that the cross is not vital in the lives of men and women today.

I think we need to remember without any criticism, and it isn't my purpose today to castigate nor criticize any church, but simply to say this, that one of the great tragedies of Christendom at this very hour are the number of churches where an individual can attend Sunday after Sunday after Sunday and never hear a single word from the pulpit that would lead that individual to be born again of the Spirit and receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Now I'm thinking of the church at large when I make that statement. Certainly we may even wear the cross, we may carry it upon our watch chains. We may even have it around our necks as a necklace. We may even carry it as an earring. But my friend, unless the cross has become part and parcel of the human heart, and Jesus Christ is living within, it makes no difference whatsoever. The cross of Christ must be preached. It must be preached with authority and with spiritual power if it's going to bring men and women to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Jesus said to this church at Laodicea, "You say that you are rich." You see, this church was a self-satisfied congregation. Some years ago, one of my pastoral friends held an evangelistic meeting in the Pacific Northwest. The first morning he was there, a man came over to the hotel and said to the minister, "We want you to preach at our Sunday morning service. We're very anxious to have you see our beautiful church and to hear our wonderful choir." But the tragedy was that when he did go over, he found that there was no message that was vital in that church. He found that the people were not being fed the word of God.

He found that people were not being led to the Lord Jesus Christ with a resultant effect, that it must have fallen under the condemnation of the Lord as it gives it to Laodicea, He says, "You say that you are rich, but you are in reality spiritually poor." I remember up in First Baptist Church, Salem, Oregon, when I was pastor there before coming down here for eleven years, how

that we did have the joy to lead that great church in a great building program. And I remember how one of the evangelists who came to our church for a series of meetings, exhorted our people to be spiritually humble as they met in this extremely beautiful building. He said something that I have never forgotten. He said, "Always remember that your church should never be too pretty to be able to pray in." Did you know, there's a great deal of truth in that. The scripture says that it's possible for us to come to the place where we look at the beauty of the building, we look at its furnishings, we look at its organization, we look at all that is going on in the social realm, and my friend, all of it is lost in the light of no spiritual program at all. There is a great danger of the Church of Jesus Christ getting to the place where emphasis is laid only on material wealth and to lose sight of spiritual power. Silver and gold, He said. "We have need of nothing," said the people of the Laodicean church. They were independent. We can get along without the Lord, we're rich. And to show off our property, and our membership, and our wonderful organ, and our beautiful choir. "No trouble for my church to get money," said a preacher, "We have a rich membership." But, my friend, I wonder if at the same time the membership of that church is rich in spiritual wealth, rather than rich in material things of this life.

Now the scripture says in the 17th verse of Revelation chapter three concerning the church at Laodicea, "Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Oh what a description for a church. He says you're wretched. And I'm glad, my friend, that I did not write the Book of Revelation, because I'm sure that I would never be able to put down in language this strong the things that I felt in my own heart. But Jesus Christ does. This one who is the Christ of love, this one who is the Christ of mercy, and of understanding, and sympathy, and pity, and

patience, and long suffering is the very Christ who levels His finger at the Laodicean church, and He said, you're wretched as a church. Yes. They were oppressed with a great burden, this church at Laodicea. And their great burden was the very wealth which they possessed and that they carried. It was a tremendous burden to them. The church wasn't burdened with a heavy debt, but they were burdened with great wealth. Sometime ago, I remember one of my colleagues mentioning a fact that he was called once to serve as pastor in a church in a particular state of the American continent. And before he got to the field, a man wrote to him and said, "Pastor, you hadn't better go down to that particular church because it's burdened with a heavy debt." And believe me, it was. But this pastor said a very singular thing. He said, "I would rather go to a church burdened with a heavy debt and on their knees before God in prayer, alive spiritually, winning souls to Jesus Christ, and searching the word of God than go to a church which is filled with moneybags and baggage of the world, and is trying to have only a materialistically and a physically good time."

Yes, certainly, how the heart of the Savior must have been touched with pity for this church at Laodicea as he realized their spiritual condition. And they were really poor. Poor as paupers on the highway. From their standpoint of spiritual wealth, this church was in reality only a beggar. They were blind, not able to see clearly. And how many Christian people today, my friend, as we live in the Laodicean church age, are people who have their whole possessions tied up with this old world. But they are spiritually and absolutely blind when it comes to the things of the Word of God and their own relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "You're naked. Now find clothes." But let me tell you, fine clothes did not get very far in the presence of Jesus Christ. This church that said she was rich and had fine clothing, Jesus said you are in reality only nude,

spiritually, as far as I'm concerned. Stripped of the clothing of the righteousness of Christ. You remember when Jesus told this church in Philadelphia that he would clothe them in fine linen. He was speaking of His own spiritual righteousness that would clothe the individual believing members of that congregation. The fine linen of righteousness. And when the true church is called out, and the resurrection of the dead in Christ begins to take place, the believing group of people will not be thinking about their earthly clothing because they will be clothed with a glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ. Isn't it wonderful to know the Savior? Isn't it wonderful to be clothed in His righteousness, white and clean, shed and washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ?

And then Jesus goes on to tell this particular church that He wishes that they were either hot on the one hand or cold on the other. Now, isn't it a strange thing for Him to say? "I would that you were hot or cold." Now I can understand how He might say, "I wish that you were hot, I wish that you were on fire for Me." But when He says "I wish you were either hot or cold", that my friend, is quite difficult to understand. But this is what I think is meant here. I believe it is ten thousand times easier to reach the man who has no money than to reach the man who has everything and puts God out of His life. You see, one of the dangers we face in America today is the danger of prostrating ourselves and kneeling down and worshipping before the god of materialism. Oh, how we're anxious to have the material things of life. We put everything behind in order to get what we want from a material point of view. Yes, you were Luke warm He said. You are neither for me nor are you against me. You don't even give me a thought in your life. And there are people like that, certainly, who who live from one week to the next without ever giving a thought of their own spiritual welfare, who would never even give a thought to where

they will spend eternity when this life is over, who never give a thought about what will be done concerning their own souls forever. Yes, some people will be members of a church and go out, and certainly so identified with this materialistic age that they deny Jesus Christ whenever it is done. No, there is no difference between the down and outer and the up and outer.

And Jesus said "I will spew the out of My mouth." Now this is the word of Christ, you see. Now, that's a strange situation, isn't it? In other words, God says to this half-baked church of Laodicea, I don't want you. There is nothing in this world, my friend, more nauseated than trying to drink tepid, lukewarm water. Let's either have it hot or cold, one or the other. Jesus said I can't stand you because you're neither hot nor cold. And oh, the tragedy of people who never give Him a thought, who are lukewarm. For you remember, Jesus Himself said that the individual who is not with Him is the individual who is definitely against Him. Now we come to His advice, as you examine the scripture before you. "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich, and white clothing that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not make its appearance. And I want to anoint thine eyes with [unintelligible] that thou may see." You see, the Lord is trying to teach this church at Laodicea that the true wealth is always spiritual wealth, and the true raiment is spiritual raiment, and the true wisdom is spiritual wisdom that He gives. He says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." The other night, I was visiting in my own study with a very personable and wonderful young colored man who comes from Central Africa, who is a student in the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. And as we shared with his young man, many, many wonderful things out of the word of God. He said this to me as he looked straight into my eyes.

He said, "You know, I have a longing often to go back to Africa." And this is the reason. He said, "Those people out there who love the Lord do not bow down before the god of materialism." He said, "Many of them have almost memorized all of the verses of the Bible." And he said, "They are red hot for Jesus Christ." Here they are, out where you and I, in a sense, would look down upon them because they live in the bush. But he said, "When the trumpet sounds and the resurrection takes place, and the church of Jesus Christ goes home to be with her Lord," he said, "we're going to see coming out of the African bush some of the greatest Christian statesmen, and believers, and Bible teachers, and preachers, and workers this world has ever, ever seen." Yes. This world is not composed of material things. This world is not composed of material wealth. But its true riches lies in its spiritual understanding. If the Lord Jesus Christ hadn't loved this church, my friend, He never would have put up with it as long as He did. If the Lord Jesus Christ were standing here in the flesh, even today in my place, and speaking to you over the radio, and was looking down on your face as He would and as He could, I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, out of the very depths of His own heart, would tell you, my friend, how much He really loved you. Not a hard word, no anger, "As many as He loves," as the scripture says, "He chastened." And the reason that He chastens this particular Laodicean church, and with it the age of the church in which we live today, and the reason that He chastens you and me oft is because He loves us, and He wants us to be won back to Himself.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice," says Jesus in the third chapter of Revelation, "and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Oh my friend, here is the Savior asking for one man in the church, communion and fellowship restored at the Lord's table, if any man in this church will open the door. Here is the

opportunity for one man in the church at Laodicea to open the door and save a whole church. If any man will open the door. I want you to see the Savior, my friend, as He stands outside and knocks. Not so much at the individual heart as He stands at the door of every church, and also knocks for admittance. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of His body, which is the church. If there ever was a time in the history of the New Testament Church from the day of Pentecost to the present moment of time, when the Church of Jesus Christ needed a spiritual revival, my friend. It is at this very present moment. I am not thinking of a spiritual revival that you and I are able to work up. I've seen a good many of those, and a revival that God's people can pray down from the heart of God is the only kind of a spiritual awakening we can use and that we need. The days are getting short. The end of the age is coming closer and closer. The coming of the Lord is nearer and nearer, my friend. And it won't be long until the dispensation of God's grace will come to a close. And we ought to be on our knees praying for a real Holy Spirit awakening in the churches of America and around the world. This is what I want from my own church. This is what I want for my own heart. This is what every Bible believing, Bible preaching, sympathetic minister wants for his own people.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock," is the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only at the church, but also my friends, Jesus is standing at your own heart's door this very moment. I know that this message is to a church and to a period of church history, don't misunderstand me, but this invitation is also to the individual, and how the Lord is knocking at your door right now as you listen to me speak. If you have never received Him to be your own personal Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ perhaps has been knocking at your heart's door for a long, long time. You remember what your wife told you about what you ought to do in order to be a Christian? You remember

what the pastor said in church about the necessity of your taking a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ? You know what your mother said to you before she died and went to be with the Lord? That she wanted you, her son, her daughter, to join her on the other side? Well, my friend, it will only come as you accept Christ to be your own personal Savior from sin. The Lord Jesus is standing at your heart's door, and He's knocking. Sometimes it's the knock of love, and again, when we've gone so far away from Him we become so hard that someone-and somehow we can't even hear Him knock. It comes as a clap of thunder, and it frightens us, and we begin to think about it.

Some time ago, one of the fine ministers of our land told a little story that I wanted to share with you this morning. He said there was an engineer on the railroad running the milk train out of the city of Chicago. In the morning he would go out and gather up the milk and he would come back in the morning and bring the milk supply into the city. His home was located very close to the track, and there was a picket fence all around the yard, and every morning as he went past his house, he would blow the whistle, and his little girl would run out and wave to him as he rolled by. He was a very wicked man, a typical man of the world, without any thought for spiritual things in his own life. Many, many times he would come home under the influence of liquor, and he would beat up his wife until the neighbors would come in and make him stop. But somehow this little girl was able to wind herself around her father's heart, and so when the little girl would slip out and wave to him, he was always anxiously looking for this little girl to be in the yard. And every morning and every afternoon as he went past on his route, here she would be, and she would be greeting him every day. One hot summer day, the little girl slipped out and waved him goodbye. And during the day, she was out on the street playing with the children, and one little

girl raised the cry of Mad Dog, and all the little children fled for safety but little Janice, and the dog got her by the throat and lacerated her throat so badly that she passed away in our home a few hours later on that very day.

They sent out a dispatch to her father, but somehow it was lost on the way and he didn't even get it. So that that afternoon when he came in sight of his home, he took the whistle cord in his hand and he blew a long blast of the whistle. And he leaned out of the cab window and watched that little spot on the fence. And the engine came and passed. But there was no little girl to greet him. He pulled the train into the yard, and the hustler told him, "You'd better go home". And he said, "What is the matter with my little girl?" And the hustler told him again, "You'd better go home." He was afraid to tell him what was the matter. And so he did go home. And as he neared the house, he saw that the blinds were all pulled, and he came with fear and trembling. He walked to the side door, his wife met him and said, "Oh, Ali, something terrible has happened to our little girl." And she told him the story and he went into the front room, and there lay that lifeless little form that he loved with all his heart. It was God knocking at his heart, and he dropped down on his knees beside the body of his little girl, and he sobbed his way into the presence of God. He said, "Oh, it has taken this to break my hard, stony heart." The man found God in the very room where lay the body of his little girl. And now he's a Christian man, on his engine where he used to carry this and carry that, you will find a Bible. He's a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he's led many, many railroad men to believe in the Savior he's come to love. But that's what it took. That was how God had to call him. Tragedy came into his life.

It may not always be true, my friend, but remember, God through Christ is standing at your heart's door, and He is knocking. Is He there now? What's it going to take to make you listen? "I stand at the door enough, if any man," yes, "if any man," you see, "hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him, and he with Me. The message of the church at Laodicea, what a tremendous truth. And what a tremendous message is this particular word. Well, we trust that all of you will be in the Lord's house on the Lord's Day. Why not take a moment, my friend, on this coming Sunday to take your family with you to a church. Always look for a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-honoring church, and see to it that your children are in Sunday school. See to it that you and your husband or wife take your place in spiritual responsibility in your community in your own local church. I know that God will bless you. And He'll use you to His own honor and His own glory. Yes, would you pray for us? This is Reverend Lloyd Anderson saying goodbye. And we trust God's blessing upon your life and upon your heart. Our Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee this morning for the privilege of knowing Christ. We thank Thee that He does stand at the door of the church and He knocks, and He wants to gain admittance into the congregation. He wants that His own person, His own message, His own power, His own salvation will become a part of the people of that church. And then He stands also at the individual heart of man and knocks, hoping that man will open and trust Him for salvation. Bless, we pray, the message of the seven churches of the Book of Revelation. In Jesus' name, amen.

[Song plays]

Announcer:

You've been listening to your radio Bible teacher, Dr. Lewis T. Talbot, chancellor of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles Incorporated. Address all mail to Dr. Lewis T. Talbot, 558 South Oak Street, Los Angeles 17, California.

[Song plays again]